

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
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Shore-lines -- Recreational use
Ca - Alameda Co.

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Regions -- Planning --
Ca - Alameda Co.

PRELIMINARY
PUBLIC ACCESS PLAN FOR SAN FRANCISCO BAY
PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Southern Alameda County

These preliminary findings and conclusions are based on a physical inventory and analysis of the land use, natural, and visual factors (resources) of the shoreline area. Each of the factors were evaluated by the staff as to their specific relationship and/or effect on public access to and along the Bay. A complete description of the process and criteria utilized in the evaluation is contained in a separate appendix entitled "Background & Description".

Because of the extent and variety of the Bay shoreline, these findings and conclusions should not be considered a complete and final evaluation of every part of the Southern Alameda County shoreline as it relates to public access. Changes in land use and natural conditions over time create a need for detailed analysis of each shoreline site when it is being actively considered for public access by the Commission or by any other agency.

The Southern Alameda County area (from Roberts Landing in San Leandro to the Santa Clara County line) is one of several geographical portions which with other elements will compose the complete Public Access Plan.

I. FINDINGS

These findings are in two parts: "Area-Wide Findings," which generally apply to the entire study area or a large portion of it; and, "Site Specific Findings," which apply only to the specific sites described.

A. Area-wide Findings

1. Wildlife and wildlife habitat (especially native vegetation) generally form the most significant natural resources around this shoreline. Some special considerations with regard to public access to these areas are:

a. Marsh and Mudflat Areas:

(1) According to the California Department of Fish & Game the margins of wetlands are transitional zones or ecotones which provide valuable wildlife habitat. Therefore, any access to such areas may have to be restricted to "point" rather than "continuous" access, e.g., to the shoreline rather than along it, in order to mitigate the adverse impact of human intrusion on wildlife resources, especially the more timid species.

- (2) Because of there fragile character, any "shoreline" public access to marsh areas should occur only at the marsh-upland interface, and not at the marsh-Bay (open water) edge.
- (3) Generally marshes, the tops of sound levees along marshes, and other fragile habitat can withstand some public access to their perimeters if the site is extensive enough, if the access is properly controlled or restricted as noted in (1) above, and motor vehicles are prohibited.

- b. Seasonal use: some habitats (such as harbor seal hauling grounds, and certain nesting sites and hunting areas) are suitable for access only when not in use by wildlife or during hunting season.
- c. Critical nesting areas (such as heron and egret rookeries) and rare and endangered species habitat may be adversely affected by human contact. Public access in such sites may be: (1) undersirable; (2) possible with certain mitigation techniques; or (3) possible without any adverse impacts depending on both the site and species involved.
- d. There are insufficient detailed data available regarding the impact of various types of public access on wildlife habitats.

- 2. Some areas of this shoreline are susceptible to flooding during periods of extremely heavy rainfall or because of tsunamis (earthquake-caused ocean waves). This potential hazard makes these areas most suitable for low intensity and unstructured uses such as public access.
- 3. There are no areas of bluffs, cliffs, or steep slopes along this section of Bay shoreline.
- 4. Many historic and archeologic sites exist near the Bay. Additional studies will be needed to determine if any sites have access potential.
- 5. Nearly all of the shoreline of the Southern Alameda County area lies within the city limits of San Leandro, Hayward, and Fremont. However, none of this shoreline is urbanized since most of it is occupied with active or recently abandoned salt evaporating ponds. Sanitary land fills comprise a minor portion of the area. A majority of this 62-mile shoreline, approximately 84%, is or is scheduled to become part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, operated by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 6. As result of the extensive diking for the creation of salt ponds in the late 19th century, none of the original shoreline exists in this area, however, numerous tidal marshes and the salt ponds serve as valuable wildlife habitat in the area. Such rare and endangered species as the salt marsh harvest mouse and the clapper rail are found in this area. In addition, the Alameda song sparrow and the harbor seal find refuge along this shoreline.

7. There are no marinas along this stretch of shoreline. The closest marina facilities are at San Leandro to the north, Alviso to the south, and Palo Alto across the bay to the west. There is no topographic relief along this shoreline. Therefore, such features as the salt pile at Newark, Coyote Hills, transmission towers, radio towers, the San Mateo Bridge, and the Dumbarton highway and railroad bridges are the predominant visual elements in this landscape. Any significant visibility of this portion of the Bay is only available from the State Highway crossings at the San Mateo Bridge and the Dumbarton Bridge. Users of Coyote Hills Regional Park (EBRPD) 1-1/2 miles east of the shoreline are treated to some outstanding panoramic views of the Bay.
8. There is no public transit access to this portion of the shoreline. However, San Mateo County Transit System (SamTrans) does provide limited service between Hayward and San Mateo across the San Mateo Bridge. Rail passengers using Amtrak's Coast Starlight have only two quick views of the Bay when crossing Mud Slough and Coyote Creek near the ghost town of Drawbridge.
9. The prevailing winds along this shoreline are generally northwesterly at speeds of approximately 14 miles per hour. Summer fog incidence in this area ranges from ten percent (10%) of the time in the afternoons to thirty percent (30%) of the time in the mornings for the area.

B. Specific Findings

1. Most of the shoreline between Roberts Landing and the visually-prominent San Mateo Bridge is retained by dikes, built prior to BCDC creation, which keeps Bay waters from encroaching back into areas that were previously part of San Francisco Bay. Except for the acreage occupied by the San Lorenzo Sanitary District and the sanitary land fill area of the Oakland Scavenger Company, most of the acreage behind these dikes is capable of being restored as tidal marsh. A 270-acre parcel just north of Johnson Landing will be acquired and restored to tidal marsh as mitigation for construction of the Dumbarton Bridge. Even though most of this section of shoreline provides habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl, there have been no known siting of rare or endangered species. Plans of the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) and the Hayward Area Shoreline Planning Agency (HASPA) call for acquisition of 927 acres and provision of various recreational and interpretive facilities at various areas including the San Lorenzo shoreline/Bockman Channel, Hayward Landing area, and Johnson Landing.
2. The shoreline between the San Mateo Bridge and the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel is characterized by dikes and shorefront tidal marshes. A substantial portion of the inboard area is devoted to salt ponds. The existing tidal marsh at the mouth of the Old Alameda Creek, an endangered species habitat for both clapper rail and salt marsh harvest mouse, is proposed as a regional wildlife preserve for acquisition by the East Bay Regional Park District. A Park District bicycle and pedestrian trail connects Coyote Hills Regional Park with the Bay along both sides of the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel.

3. The 900-acre Coyote Hills Regional Park with its fresh water marshes and commanding hills, is a significant open space and recreation resource in this area. Red Hill (elevation 291) and South Red Hill are significant land forms and commanding vista points in this area. Panoramic views of the salt ponds and the South Bay are seen from both the hilltops and the peripheral trail in the Park. The Park serves as a major staging area for trail use of the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel both to the Bay and eastward to Niles Canyon.
4. The remainder of this shoreline from Alameda Creek south to the county line at Coyote Creek is characterized by dikes separating Bay waters from salt evaporating ponds. Bayward of these dikes are substantial tidal marshes which serve as habitat for migratory shorebirds and waterfowl, as well as rare and endangered species such as the salt marsh harvest mouse and the clapper rail. In addition, harbor seals utilize portions of Mowry and Newark Sloughs as hauling grounds. All of this area has been or is scheduled to be acquired by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a major portion of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.
5. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed a master plan for the Refuge which calls for a number of interpretative facilities and trails. Because of its status as a wildlife refuge, the majority of the area will not be open for public access except by permit from the Fish and Wildlife Service.
6. As a result of the BCDC permit issued to the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) for the construction of the new Dumbarton Bridge, a portion of the old trestle will be retained as a fishing pier, managed by the Wildlife Refuge. The old access road to the structure will be retained as a bike and pedestrian way, as well as providing access for a shuttle bus between the Refuge headquarters and the pier. As part of the bridge construction CalTrans will provide a trail overcrossing at the toll plaza.
7. In addition to Coyote Hills, the Leslie salt pile at Newark and the Dumbarton Bridge structures are the only significant visual elements in this shoreline area. Because of the generally flat terrain, other structures such as power transmission lines and radio towers achieve visual prominence.

II. Conclusions

- A. Public Access Management Conclusions. As noted in the staff findings, marshes and mudflats are unique resources that require special consideration with regard to possible adverse impact from public access. Therefore, in view of these findings, and in addition to the existing Bay Plan policies on marshes and mudflats, and public access, the staff has made the following conclusions and is considering recommending their adoption as policies by the Commission.
 1. Because of potential conflicts with wildlife uses, public access in tidal marsh, mudflat, and sensitive habitat areas should be provided only where the access can be controlled and managed preferably by an

appropriate public agency or non-profit organization. To assist in this management, additional in-depth studies are needed to evaluate the impact of public access on these areas.

2. In order to provide for adequate public access to these tidal marsh, mudflat, and sensitive habitat areas, all agencies involved with the acquisition and/or management of these areas for public use should allocate adequate funding for the construction and continuing maintenance of adequate public-use facilities that would safeguard the natural character of the area.

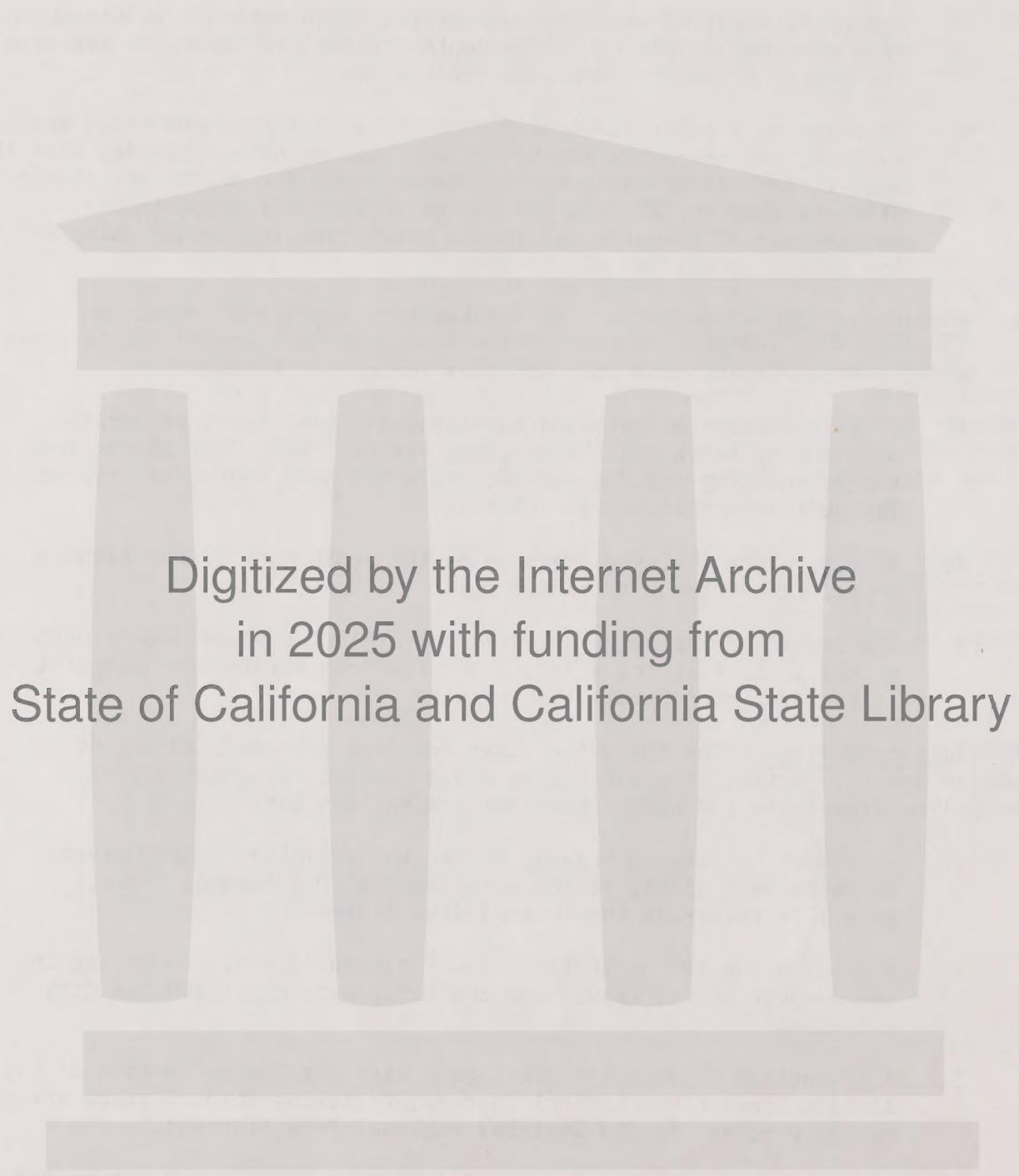
B. Exceptional Shoreline Sites. On the basis of a physical resource inventory and analysis, the staff has concluded that the following sites would provide exceptional opportunities for public access:

1. Utilizing existing outboard and inboard dikes, the trail system proposed by HASPA and the East Bay Regional Park District between Roberts Landing and Highway 92, including spur routes to proposed Bayfront interpretive facilities.
2. A trail along the existing dike on the south bank of Old Alameda Creek, from Union City to the Bay.
3. The combination bicycle/pedestrian/shuttle bus access route proposed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service from the Refuge headquarters to the Dumbarton Bridge fishing pier.

C. Important Sites. The following sites are also extremely important for public access, particularly since they would provide for a variety of shoreline experience and access continuity along the Bay.

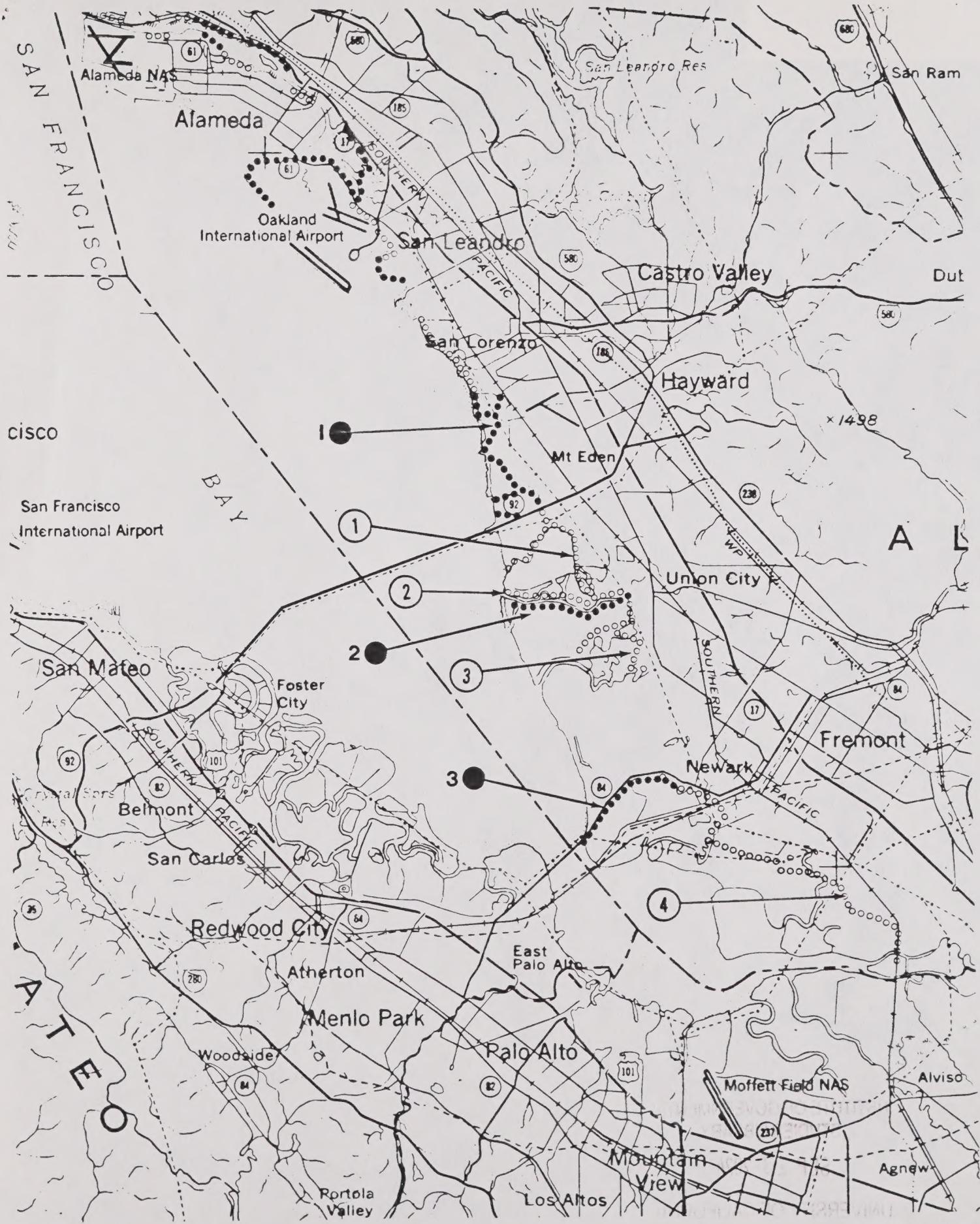
1. A connection between Highway 92, in the vicinity of the Oliver Brothers salt works, to the north bank of Old Alameda Creek, generally following the inboard dike system.
2. A route along the north bank of Old Alameda Creek, connecting the above route (C.1., above) and the tidal gate dike at Union City (Alvarado).
3. A connection between the tidal gate dike and the north bank of the Alameda Creek Flood Control Channel, following inboard dikes and routes proposed by the East Bay Regional Park District.
4. The inboard trails between the Refuge headquarters and Drawbridge proposed by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the Refuge Master Plan.

D. Other Shoreline Sites. The list of sites above is intended to only identify locations that present exceptional or unusually good opportunities for public access. Additional public access to the shoreline wherever possible remains both a highly desirable goal and in most cases a requirement of the McAteer-Petris Act. Consequently, elsewhere along the shorelines, as has been the case in the past, each project should be evaluated on a permit-by-permit basis to ensure it provides "maximum feasible public access consistent with a proposed project."



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